

Why Do You Go To Trade Fairs...

...many of you might be wondering if you've taken a look at our recent homepage report from Analytica in Munich. In fact, *Lab Times* didn't just go to Analytica, we actually presented ourselves as exhibitors at this "International Trade Fair for Instrumental Analysis, Laboratory Technology and Biotechnology". And sure enough, our *Lab Times* stand included the whole presentation package: 1,500 copies of the latest issue to take away, cool and humorous *Lab Times* freebies, and, of course, well-dressed and cheerful editors with whom to meet, chat and drink coffee (or champagne after 5 p.m.) ...

Great, you might be thinking, so why write about it? Well, it quite simply provides an ideal opportunity to explain a little more about how *Lab Times* operates and what *Lab Times* wants to be.

For example, have you ever asked yourself how we are able to provide you with your free copy of *Lab Times*? Well, believe it or not, we are not only in it for the money! A great deal of our motivation does indeed come from the fact that we enjoy science and have fun writing about it. Nevertheless, just like everyone else, we have to make a living and since this money obviously doesn't come from readers' pockets, who is footing the bill?

That's right, it's the advertisements! Companies buy page space in *Lab Times* to present their brand and products to you, *our readers*, who in turn are *their customers*. In an ideal world, this leads to a kind of continuous circle where everybody involved benefits:

- We produce informative and entertaining issues that very many of you really do read;
- Lab supply companies recognise this and, therefore, choose *Lab Times* as a broad medium through which to publicise their products to their customers;
- You, our readers, their customers, buy the products from these companies;
- We continue producing informative and (we boast) entertaining issues, which makes *Lab Times* a regular read that you don't want to miss;
- Companies continue paying for page space in *Lab Times* to present their ads to you. Thus, *Lab Times* is a free read for you and, at the same time, makes a living for us.

(At this point, however, it's important to note that the companies only buy page space to insert their ads. They have no influence whatsoever over editorial content. We, and only we, choose the content and tone of our articles. Otherwise, it would destroy the fun factor for us – see above).

Cue the trade fairs! These definitely provide the best opportunity for us to meet with lab supply companies. At Analytica in Munich a couple of weeks ago, they were all there – companies producing instruments, consumables, services and everything else for life science labs.

Over the four days, our biobusiness editor Winni K. prided himself on the innumerable stands he visited. His performance was, however, topped by our advertising salesman, Bernd B., who tirelessly either talked to companies already advertising in *Lab Times* or tried to convince other companies to become new clients. All to keep the circle turning, as outlined above...

This is only one aspect of how we benefit from showing up at certain trade fairs. Another, equally important, is the direct contact with our readers. During Analytica, many of them just came by our stand to say an encouraging, "Keep up the good work", grab a *Lab Times* helium balloon, a luminous yellow *Lab Times* slap-wrap and a piece of Swiss chocolate before strolling away. Others, however, came with specific criticisms or suggested concrete topics for article.

Most valuable, though, were visits such as that of a certain professor on the third day of Analytica. The Chief Ed already knew her and he also knew that she doesn't pull any punches when relating stories about a university researcher's life. Within half an hour she had related no less than five such "stories" – one of which was based on the political intrigue that she had encountered on the way to her current university chair; or another about some doctoral "computer kids" in her lab who failed to perform a simple physiological assay because they weren't able to mix the buffers correctly.

"Why don't you just write these stories down?" the Chief Ed suggested. "They are exactly what we want; real life stories from researchers. I'd make room for a column in *Lab Times* immediately." A couple of days after Analytica he learned that she has actually started working on it. Watch this space.

Last but not least, we were pleasantly surprised at how many visitors and readers gave us very positive feedback on our Bench Philosophy and Lab Tricks columns. At the same time, they assured us that there are a whole lot more tricks out there that you definitely won't find in any experimental manual. "It's just what you do every day in the lab," one of them stated. "To improve or adapt methods for your specific project, or to make them simpler and cheaper." A handful of them proudly revealed their own best tricks and promised to write them down, too.

Have you noticed where we have arrived with these two examples from the trade fair? Right, we have switched from "How *Lab Times* operates" to "What *Lab Times* wants to be". The message is simple: a magazine *from* scientists *for* scientists. So send us your stories and your experimental tricks. Tell us about the issues close to your heart. Even if we never meet at a trade fair...

